

LOOKING AT LUKE
WHOSE IMAGE IS ON YOU?

Wednesday, September 2

Reading: Luke 20-21

Luke 20:22 *"Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"* **23** *[Jesus] saw through their duplicity and said to them,* **24** *"Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?"* *"Caesar's," they replied.* **25** *He said to them, "Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."*

A little boy wanted \$100 very badly. He prayed for weeks, but nothing happened. So, he decided to write a letter to God requesting \$100. When the postal authorities received the letter to "God, USA", they decided to send it to the President. The President was so amused that he instructed his secretary to send the little boy a \$5 bill. The President thought this would appear to be a lot of money to a little boy. The little boy was delighted with the \$5 bill and sat down to write a thank-you note to God. The postal authorities forwarded this letter on to the President, too. It read: "Dear God, thank you very much for sending the money. However, I noticed that for some reason you sent it through Washington, D.C., and those guys deducted \$95 in taxes!"¹

No one likes to pay taxes. That is why you hear so many IRS jokes during tax season. The Jews of Jesus' day really hated paying taxes to the Romans. They considered every tax collector who worked for the Romans a traitor to Israel. Thus, this question of paying taxes to Caesar was a trap. Jesus' enemies realized that if Jesus said "yes" the crowds would turn against Him. If He said "no" the Roman authorities would arrest Him for treason against Rome.

Jesus saw through their trap. He asked to see a denarius, the Roman coin used to pay the tax. On this coin was a picture of the emperor with the inscription "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus." When asked, the men questioning Jesus had to admit that it was Caesar's image on the coin. "Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" was Jesus' reply.

In one statement, Jesus had both acknowledged their responsibility to human government but also and more importantly reminded them of their duty to God. Caesar's image was on the coin, so they must give him the tax required. But God's image was on them (Genesis 1:26-27), so they had a responsibility to live for God.

The Bible tells us we should pray for our government leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2) and obey them when their laws don't contradict the commands of God (Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14). It even tells us to pay our taxes (Romans 13:5-7)!!

However, the second part of Jesus' statement is the more important part. Governments rise and fall, laws change; but our responsibility to God remains steadfast. As God made all people in His image, all people will answer to Him for what they did with the life He has given them. As Christians we should be even more aware of our duty for we not only bear God's image from creation, but we also bear the image of Jesus Christ because we are a "new creation" in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17).

If someone was to ask of your life, "Whose image is on it?" how would people answer?

Is the image of Christ impressed on your life and actions?

Are you giving God what belongs to Him? (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/illustration/Taxes/200075/>